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Message Text

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PAGE 01 JIDDA 06596 141429Z
ACTION NODS-00

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S E C R E T JIDDA 6596

NODIS CHEROKEE

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MPOL, OVIP
SUBJECT: PROJECTED VISIT BY DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE DUNCAN

REF: JIDDA 5695

1. I HAVE LEARNED UNOFFICIALLY THAT DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE DUNCAN IS PLANNING TO VISIT SAUDI ARABIA OCTOBER 26 OCTOBER 28. I CERTAINLY DO NOT WISH TO DISCOURAGE A VISIT BY DEPUTY SECRETARY DUNCAN, BUT THERE ARE CERTAIN PROBLEMS CONNECTED WITH HIS PLANS WHICH I FEEL I MUST POINT OUT.

2. FIRST, SECRETARY BROWN HAS A LONG OUTSTANDING INVITATION TO VISIT SAUDI ARABIA. MIN OF DEF PRINCE SULTAN HAS MENTIONED TO ME ON AT LEAST TWO OCCASIONS THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE THE SEC OF DEF VISIT HERE. ON OCCASION OF VISIT OF DOD DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY MURRAY ON AUGUST 1, SULTAN EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT SECRETARY BROWN HAD NOT MADE THE VISIT (REFTEL). MURRAY EXPLAINED THAT BOTH SECRETARY BROWN AND DEPUTY SECRETARY DUNCAN WISHED TO VISIT. SULTAN SAID THAT DUNCAN WAS OF COURSE WELCOME, BUT HE EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF A VISIT BY BROWN. ABOUT TWO WEEKS AGO, I WAS CALLED AT HOME ONE EVENING BY MAJOR BANDAR BIN SULTAN, SON OF DEF MIN, WHO SAID HE WANTED A FAVOR
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FROM USG. WHEN QUERIED AS TO WHAT IT WAS, HE STATED THAT HE WOULD LIKE ME TO ENCOURAGE THE SEC OF DEF TO VISIT THE KINGDOM. I TOLD HIM THAT WE EXPECTED THE DUNCAN VISIT SOON, AND GAVE HIM RESUME OF DUNCAN'S IMPRESSIVE BACKGROUND. HE REPLIED THAT THE DUNCAN VISIT WAS WELCOMED, BUT WAS NOT THE SAME AS "THE BOSS." HE ALSO INDICATED THAT SEC BROWN HAD MADE SOME COMMITMENT, POSSIBLY TO PRINCE SAUD, ABOUT A VISIT HERE. ACCORDINGLY, I FEEL

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THAT SAG MAY BE MIFFED IF DUNCAN VISIT IS NOT PRECEDED BY OR IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWED BY A VISIT BY BROWN.

3. SECOND, I ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT BROWN WILL BE GOING TO ISRAEL, JORDAN AND EGYPT LATE IN THE FALL. THIS COMBINATION OF COUNTRIES WILL OBVIOUSLY MAKE BROWN'S TRIP APPEAR TO BE SOMEHOW CONNECTED WITH ARAB-ISRAEL PROBLEM. IN VIEW OF SAUDI ROLE IN PEACE PROCESS AND OUR INCLUSION OF SAUDI ARABIA IN THE ITINERARY OF OTHER IMPORTANT VISITORS WHO HAVE COME TO THE MIDDLE EAST IN CONNECTION WITH THE PEACE PROCESS, THE OMISSION OF SAUDI ARABIA FROM BROWN'S ITINERARY WILL BE READ AS HAVING POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE. THE VISIT BY DUNCAN IN OCTOBER WILL ONLY ACCENTUATE IN THE SAUDI MIND THE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE THEY WILL SEE IN SAUDI ARABIA'S OMISSION FROM THE BROWN ITINERARY.

4. THIRD, DUNCAN'S ITINERARY INCLUDES SUDAN, BUT NOT YAR. SAG'S ATTENTION IS CURRENTLY RIVETED ON YAR, AND IT WOULD LIKE TO SEE GESTURES THAT EMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF YAR TO THE U.S. SO AS TO SEND A SIGNAL TO PDRY AND THE RUSSIANS NOT TO ATTACK YAR. IF BOTH DUNCAN AND BROWN COME TO MIDDLE EAST THIS FALL, IT WOULD NOT SEEM NECESSARY THAT THEY BOTH GO TO YAR. I THINK ONE OF THEM SHOULD INCLUDE BOTH YAR AND SAUDI ARABIA ON HIS ITINERARY. THE OTHER CAN GET BY WITH COMING ONLY TO SAUDI ARABIA.

5. FOURTH, DUNCAN'S TRIP COMES AT A TIME WHEN TRAFFIC INTO THE
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KINGDOM IS BEGINNING TO BUILD UP RAPIDLY IN CONNECTION WITH THE ANNUAL PILGRIMAGE TO MECCA. THE GOVERNMENT WILL STILL BE IN TAIF, BUT PREPARING FOR MOVE BACK TO RIYADH AFTER HAJ. SUPPORT FOR VISIT BY EMBASSY WILL BE DIFFICULT WITH NO FACILITIES AT TAIF. HOTEL SPACE EITHER IN TAIF OR JIDDA WILL BE VIRTUALLY NON-EXISTENT EXCEPT ON ORDERS FROM THE KING OR ROYAL PROTOCOL. EVEN MORE IMPORTANT, SAG ACTIVITIES WILL BE INCREASINGLY FOCUSED AFTER OCTOBER 15 ON THE PILGRIMAGE, WITH THE RESULT THAT IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO GET THE ATTENTION OF EVEN THE MOST SENIOR OFFICIALS UNTIL AFTER THE MIDDLE OF NOVEMBER. ON TOP OF THIS, DUNCAN'S SCHEDULE PLACES HIM HERE ON FRIDAY, THE SECOND DAY OF THE SAUDI WEEKEND. THIS VIRTUALLY ASSURES HIM OF NOT SEEING ANYBODY BUT AMERICANS UNTIL THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW WEEK ON SATURDAY.

6. I WOULD LIKE TO RECOMMEND (1) THAT CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO INCLUSION OF SAUDI ARABIA IN BROWN'S ITINERARY AND NOTIFICATION TO SAG EITHER SIMULTANEOUSLY OR PRIOR TO PROPOSAL FOR DUNCAN VISIT, (2) THAT ONE OF THEM INCLUDE YAR ON HIS ITINERARY, AND (3) THAT DUNCAN'S TRIP BE POSTPONED UNTIL AFTER DECEMBER 1. IF POSTPONEMENT IS NOT POSSIBLE, IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE SCHEDULE BE ADJUSTED SO THAT HE WILL NOT BE HERE ON THE SAUDI WEEKEND

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(THURSDAY AND FRIDAY), BUT EARLIER THAT WEEK. OFFICIAL HOLIDAYS WILL PROBABLY BEGIN THE NEXT WEEK AND SAUDI GOV USUALLY BEGINS TO QUIT A FEW DAYS EARLY.

7. IN ANY EVENT, WHATEVER DECISION IS MADE, EMBASSY WILL PROVIDE ALL POSSIBLE SUPPORT. IF JIDDA IS TO BE BASE FOR VISIT WITH TRIPS TO TAIF FOR SAG MEETINGS, I INVITE DEPSEC DUNCAN TO BE OUR HOUSEGUEST WITH ONE ADDITIONAL BEDROOM AVAILABLE FOR OTHER VIP GUEST OR AIDE. WE NEED TO KNOW ASAP DEPSEC'S PLANS INCLUDING NUMBER IN PARTY, AS PLANNING AND LOGISTICAL SUPPORT FOR VISIT SHOULD BEGIN WITHOUT DELAY; OTHERWISE, DIFFICULTIES AS ABOVE SET FORTH MAY BECOME INSURMOUNTABLE.
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